

{As Prepared for Delivery}

**Earth Day 2006
Missoula, Montana Forest Service Announcement
Thomas C. Dorr, Under Secretary for Rural Development
April 24, 2006
Remarks**

Good morning/afternoon.

**It is a pleasure to be here and -- on behalf of President Bush and
Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns -- to join you in celebrating this,
the 36th anniversary of Earth Day.**

36 years ago, America embraced a new environmental ethic.

**I know that 1970 is already ancient history for some of the younger folks
here, but it was just yesterday for those of us of a certain age.**

**It was in 1970 that President Nixon proposed the creation of the
Environmental Protection Agency. The first Earth Day was celebrated
the same year.**

That coincidence of timing was no accident. Clearly, a new consensus had emerged. 36 years later, it still holds firm.

We have come a long way in the intervening years -- but there is more yet to do. So today, we have two purposes:

- First, to recognize the hard work of many thousands of people in all walks of life who have helped create a cleaner world;**
- And secondly, to renew our own commitment to clean air, fishable and swimmable streams, and a healthier environment for all Americans.**

That's a commitment we take seriously, one community, one business, one project at a time. As President Bush has put it on many occasions, we are called upon to be good stewards -- and if we take that call seriously ...
... Every day is Earth Day.

It's important to acknowledge that America's progress since that first Earth Day is significant. This effort *does* make a difference.

“In 1972, only 36 percent of the nation's assessed stream miles were safe for uses such as fishing and swimming: today, about 60 percent are safe for such uses.”

Even more dramatically, since 1970 America's population has increased 40%.

Energy consumption has increased 47%.

Vehicle miles traveled are up 171% and Gross Domestic Product is up 187%.

In short, we are a much bigger, more energy intensive, and significantly wealthier country than we were in 1970.

Yet at the same time, total emissions of the six primary pollutants* targeted by the Clean Air Act are DOWN 54%.

That is an astonishing achievement. We've grown the economy and grown the country while dramatically reducing pollution.

That progress continues in many ways, large and small. Developing new sources of environmentally friendly, renewable energy ... and making more efficient use of existing resources, including biomass ... are two of the most important.

It is therefore a privilege for me, on behalf of President Bush and Secretary Johanns to announce today \$4.2 million in grants from the U.S. Forest Service to 18 recipients to develop innovative uses for woody biomass from our national forests.

The Montana Community Development Corporation which we are highlighting today is just one of these recipients, but the project for which MCDC has received funding is an outstanding illustration of an integrated, holistic approach to resource management and conservation.

The MCDC project will allow the efficient use of a biomass resource that is currently going to waste. It will reduce the amount of burning in

the national forest and improve air quality. And it will provide a new, renewable source of energy.

In my book, that's a win-win-win solution. I know it's a project of which the Forest Service is very proud – as are the other 17 projects being announced today.

But as Chairman of the USDA Energy Council, let me emphasize that conservation and environmental stewardship aren't just priorities for the Forest Service.

The commitment to conservation, clean energy, and efficient management of our resources extends throughout USDA, and indeed throughout the government and nation.

At USDA Rural Development, for example – and bear in mind that we are a relatively small agency -- we've invested over \$350 million in renewable energy and over \$8.4 billion for water and wastewater projects since 2001.

And this year for Earth Day we are announcing another 43 water and wastewater projects totaling over \$94.3 million.

Whether it is USDA Rural Development, or the Forest Service, or DOE or EPA or any of many, many others, this is a commitment that is sustained year-in and year-out.

We have indeed come a long way in 36 years, and we continue to move ahead.

That's why it's a privilege for me to be here today. Congratulations to MRDC and the other recipients – and thanks for the contribution you are making to ensuring that every day is Earth Day.

Thank you.